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ABSTRACT

This paper describes an exploratory study in which three groups of Latina and Latino high school students, previously identified as "at risk," performed at a level of "giftedness" after an instructional intervention grounded on the theoretical orientations of cultural discontinuity and self-efficacy. A total of 29 Spanish-speaking (but generally not able to read or write Spanish) students participated in advanced Spanish language and literature classes. Twenty of the students successfully passed the College Board Advanced Placement Spanish Language examination, thus receiving college credit. Three aspects of classroom climate and curriculum were identified as indicators of student success: (1) student-teacher relationships; (2) student-student relationships; and (3) teaching-learning strategies. Other program aspects involved home visits and interviewing students to determine their perceptions about ethnic identity, self-esteem, personal academic expectations, and home-cultural expectations. (Contains 18 references.) (DB)

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COLLEGE BOARD ADVANCED PLACEMENT SPANISH LITERATURE FOR AT-RISK NATIVE SPEAKERS: A MODEL WITH MULTICULTURAL, BILINGUAL AND GIFTED DIMENSIONS

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This paper was presented at the 1994 American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana.

This study supports multiculturalists' theoretical claim linking student achievement of academic excellence to culturally relevant learning and teaching (Ladson-Billings, 1992). Students perform best when the structure and process of learning and teaching interactions are consistent with the values and norms of their home's ethnic, linguistic, and cultural orientations. This study documents the effect of culturally centered pedagogy on a group of Latina and Latino students who were previously labeled as "at risk," yet when enrolled in an advanced Spanish class, performed at a level of 'giftedness' as a result of the instructional intervention.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was guided by two theoretical orientations: cultural discontinuity and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986). Cultural discontinuity is based on the premise that students from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds often do poorly in school because of mis-matches between school and home cultures. Conversely, students do better where there is compatibility between cultures (Au, 1994).

Asante (1991-92) argues that acceptance of the dominant Eurocentric culture as a 'universal' culture whose values and mores are unilaterally imposed on a diverse student population causes psychological and cultural dislocation and learning difficulties for students of color. Other researchers add that this discontinuity produces anxiety, aggression and socially maladaptive behaviors (Irvine, 1990; Gay, 1992; Shade & New, 1993). It often causes teachers to treat students from groups of color with presumed sociocultural deficiencies, to expect low performance and to reduce the time and quality of instructional efforts (King, 1994; Brophy & Good, 1974).

The self-efficacy theory suggests that the beliefs individuals hold about themselves determine their choice of behavior (Bandura, 1986). How students think of themselves influences how they respond to academic tasks. If they do not perceive themselves as performing according to the teacher expectations, they will not develop adaptive strategies that allow them to conform to teacher demands. Cole and Scribner (1974) conclude that personal values, attitudes, beliefs and perceptions allow students to interpret and justify their decisions and actions to reflect the social interactional patterns of their culture. Culture influences students' perceptions, judgments and behaviors and determines how they adapt to their social and physical environment (Shade, 1994).

METHODOLOGY

The study took place in an urban high school. The ethnic composition of the teaching staff in the school was predominantly White whereas the student population had a plurality of students of color. The student population was 12% African American, 1% American Indian, 28% Caucasian, 5% Latina and Latino (total 27 students), 54% Asian (Chinese being the largest group, approximately 26%, followed by

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Filipina and Filipino 14% and including Japanese, Korean, Samoan, Southeast Asian and Pacific Islander). Approximately 20% of the student population was identified as having limited English proficiency (LEP) and 47% did not speak English at home. A majority of the students were in a low-economic status as reflected by percentages of one-parent households and the number of students receiving federally reduced or free-lunch.

Student Population

Phase 1 School Year 1989-1990: First semester two Chicana students failed second year Spanish. Second semester, five native speakers, including the two students who had failed first semester, were recruited and placed with 12 regular students in an existing third year Spanish class. There were three females (Chicanas) and two males (Chicano and Nicaraguan) including two seniors, two sophomores and one freshman. All five students qualified for the Federal Reduced or Free Lunch Program. Three students were from single parent homes, and two were on welfare. All were a year or more behind in school grade in terms of credits earned and had serious attendance problems resulting in loss of credit due to failure to attend class. Other than attendance issues, the students did not experience unusual disciplinary problems. None of the students participated in extra-curricular activities at school. Three students held part time jobs. All came from homes where parents spoke little or no English. Although Spanish was their first language, these students could neither read nor write in Spanish.

Phase 2: School Year 1990-1991: The two students from the original five in Phase one (two students had moved and one had graduated) who had passed the College Board Advanced Placement (AP) Spanish Language exam were joined by seven new students (four male and three female) for a total of nine native speakers. Seven students were in eleventh grade and two were freshmen. In addition there were four non-native speakers in their third year of Spanish and thirty-two first year Spanish students making a total of 45 students in one class period first semester. Second semester the thirteen advanced Spanish students were given a separate class.

The new native speakers were similar to the original group. The nine students (4 Chicanas, 1 Chicano, 2 Mexican, 1 Salvadorian and 1 Peruvian) in the program in addition to being on the Federal Free or Reduced Lunch Program reflected the school profile for Latino students in the school : 61.8% were below grade level, were averaging 10.67 days absent , 21.7% dropped out and 23% were either previously suspended and/or expelled (SIOS: Data, 1992).

Phase 3 School Year 1991-1992: The program population in Phase 3 included fifteen native Spanish speakers. Four students (N = 4) were selected for the study: one Chicana from Phase I, and three students (1 Chicana, 2 Mexican immigrant male students) One male student who had participated in Phase II. Of the students who had previously participated, three had passed the AP Spanish Language test and one student had not taken any exam.

Phase 1 (N = 5) in the 1989-1990 school year and Phase 2 (N = 9) in the 1990-1991 school year included informal student interviews, small group discussions, home visits, classroom observations, and anecdotal records of teacher curricular decisions. Phase 3, during the 1991-1992 school year, involved an action research qualitative research methodology to evaluate program outcomes. Four students (N = 4), preparing to take the AP Spanish Literature College Board exam in May of 1992, were selected as participants. These students participated in an initial interview to gather biographical data and to solicit their perception of their ability to succeed on a national exam. They were involved in small group discussions regarding the learning process and their identification of self and group skills needed to succeed. Between September and May of the

1991-1992 school year anecdotal records of teaching goals and strategies, student behaviors and descriptions of memorable experiences were documented. Written teacher evaluations on each student's progress were kept. Individual student's school records were examined. A final semi-structured interview took place in May 1992, after the students had taken the exam. The focus of the semi-structured final interview was to solicit the student perception of program value and the personal, social and academic impact on them as a result of the intervention treatment. The students and teacher met for a final group meeting in July 1992, when the results from the College Board office were received.

In addition, national and state summary reports from the 1991 and 1992 Advanced Placement College Board provided information regarding the number of students, including Mexican American and other Latina(o) students, taking AP College Board exams in Spanish language and Spanish literature on the state and national level.

LIMITATIONS

Data from the first two phases of this study was not guided by a conceptual framework, or research methodology. Whereas there is a richness of data from Phase one and Phase two, such as, daily teacher lesson plan books, grade books, student's journals, letters from students, parents and community, students' work, video documentation of student presentations, newspaper articles, grant proposals and evaluation reports, these data sources were not systematically documented or collected. Yet, they were analyzed in retrospect using the research methodology developed in Phase three.

The retrospective nature of the self-report data of the initial and final student interviews in Phase three may be subject to errors in recall and inaccurate over-reporting and under-reporting which could have influenced the study findings. The classifying and coding of the data, although analyzed by an established coding scheme, involved only the investigator in the interpretative process and subsequent analysis.

OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN

High School Latina(o) students who could speak but not read and write in Spanish participated in AP Spanish Language and Spanish Literature honor class. These classes are usually designed for gifted or honor English-speaking students. At no time were the students who participated in this study tested for or identified as "gifted." These classes were offered in the World Language department; and, therefore, it was not part of the ESL or Transitional Bilingual Program at the school. All classroom interactions were conducted in Spanish.

The program took place over three years involving three phases (school years 1989-1992). Phase 1 began second semester of the 1989-1990 school year when Spanish speakers were recruited and placed with regular students in an existing advanced Spanish class.

Students participated in a culturally centered pedagogy that was used as an intervention to explore cultural, linguistic and ethnic factors that may influence academic achievement. In this program culturally centered pedagogy included: the use of Spanish language as the medium of instruction; affirmation and validation of ethnic identity; development of self-esteem; curricular content emphasis on the students' cultural heritage, history and literature; and implementation of learning strategies matching preferred learning styles, such as use of oral language, cooperative learning, peer support and family involvement.

DATA CONNECTION

The data were organized in three categories for purposes of analysis and interpretation, performance on achievement tests, classroom climate and curricular process and student

perception. Information from student school records and state and national College Board AP exams for 1991 and 1992 was used to determine if these students demonstrated academic behaviors that fell within the accepted range of giftedness, which included accelerated course content and differentiated instruction using higher level thinking skills.

RESULTS

The results of this study are presented in three sections. The first documents the students' performance on the achievement tests. The second discusses classroom climate and curricular process. The third explains student perception

Performance on Achievement Tests

At the end of the 1989-1991 school year of the program, five students took the College Board AP Spanish Language exam. All of them passed with high scores. Two students received "4's" and three received "5's." The College Board scores students on a 1-5 scale with three being the lowest and five the highest passing scores guaranteeing students college credit nationally. At the end of Phase 2 (1990-1991 school year), two students passed the AP Spanish literature test and five more students passed the AP Spanish language test. All seven students were juniors in high school. In the third year of the program (1991-1992), three students passed the Spanish Literature exam. One student passed both the Spanish Language and Spanish Literature exam with a score of "5" and "4" respectively, and one received a non passing score of "2." Four students passed the Spanish Language exam. Two students scheduled to take the language exam were unable to do so because of personal issues beyond their control. Thus, over a three-year period, 20 out of 29 of the Latina(o) students who participated in the program, received college credit in an accelerated Spanish language and Spanish literature course.

CLASSROOM CLIMATE AND CURRICULUM PROCESS

Three factors emerged as indicators of student success: student-teacher-relationships, student-student relationships and teaching-learning strategies.

Student-Teacher Relationships

The traditional roles and status of the teacher and student were altered. Students determined the focus of the lesson. The teacher provided the opportunities through materials, resources and experiences for them to learn. All students received an "A" on their high school transcript. A more important measure of success for both students and teacher was the score on the AP Spanish language and literature test. Ultimately, students would be evaluated as "proficient" if they passed the AP exam; likewise, the teacher would be deemed "competent" if the students passed.

Another indicator of progress was critical essays written periodically by students. They were evaluated on a nine-point scale using the College Board AP assessment rubric. Students received two grades on all assignments. One was an assignment completion grade and the other grade was a reflection of their work based on AP standards. The student's goal was to narrow the gap between the two scores. Competition, if any, was self-directed; cooperation was actualized and internalized.

Students were active participants in the learning process. They decided whether or not to take the AP tests. They taught each other and determined the level of excellence required. Student literary analyses were bound into booklet form to be used for "cramming" weeks before the exam. Students "graded" the essays and determined acceptance for booklet inclusion. They participated in developing of the class syllabus by selecting the content and sequence of instruction and the scheduling for after school study

groups. In the typical three hour after school grueling study sessions students argued with each other supporting their opinion with citations. They laughed, took copious notes and openly expressed their fear of failure. They could not believe that studying could actually be fun. One of the students remarked at the end of one of these grueling sessions:

> I used to worry about whether or not I would ever finish high school. Now I worry if I can get enough money to go to the University. I want to go to Berkeley. Maybe be a lawyer.

Student/Student Relationships

For most students this was the first time they were in a class together and could freely speak Spanish. They helped each other learn to read and write and seemed at ease seeking help from peers. In the second year of the program, the addition of the 32 first year students in the advanced Spanish class created a natural situation for developing strong student-student relationships. The first year students demanded, commanded, dominated and required "teacher" contact time. The Latina(o) students were still unable to work independently. The majority of them lacked the necessary skills to read independently and attend to task assignments without the interpersonal relationship they wanted, needed and expected with the teacher.

To accommodate the 32 first year students, three days a week the Latina(o) students worked as tutors with the beginning Spanish students. In return the beginning Spanish students did seatwork or worked on orals. Two days a week were devoted to the advanced students. This worked only as a schedule on the blackboard, in reality, a semester was lost for the advanced students. However, the lack of continual teacher-student interaction resulted in a natural peer mentoring process. The student-selected motto "Sí queremos, podemos." roughly translated to mean, " if we want something, we can achieve it" reflected their feelings of togetherness, of unity, of oneness, of family. This class was not an individual effort.

Teaching and Learning Strategies

Students worked in small groups and the level of proficiency in reading and writing determined each students' contribution to the group's activity. All written work such as exams, literary critiques and reflective essays were a single document produced by a collaborative group effort. Although most of the students did not know how to read and write, emphasis was placed on the development of intellectual competence by actively involving the student in critical reflection, analysis and interpretation of literature through literary discussions using appropriate terminology. For example, they understood, identified and discussed primary and secondary themes, used and applied literary terms such as paradox, hyperbole, onomatopoeia, juxtaposition, ellipse, and alliteration. By reasoning, weighing evidence and thinking originally, they discussed the structural elements of the author's work including writing styles, literary periods, as well as the influences resulting from the historical, cultural and political era in which the author wrote and lived.

At first, students listened or followed the text as the teacher read. Little by little they learned to read and write words, phrases and sentences in Spanish. They helped each other translate, summarize and write analytical papers in Spanish full of spelling and grammatical errors, but intellectually sophisticated in terms of drawing conclusions from the literature in an active, creative, abstract, complex, and in depth analysis from their own intuitive frame of reference. They did not appear to feel inadequate, or unaware of what they could do intellectually.

The goal and substance of each lesson were embedded in higher level thinking skills using a variety of learning

strategies and styles and incorporating literary concepts to actively engage the students both intellectually and emotionally. The following are examples of the curricular content which students powerfully expressed in art, music, drama, verbal and written form. Students were invited to clarify their thoughts, assumptions and feelings by:

> Discussing the "traditional" role of the mother, the concept of family honor and the influences of Catholicism. They were then asked to synthesize by identifying, comparing, analyzing, and inferring similar themes in Federico García Lorca's trilogy: Yerma, Bodas de sangre, and La Casa de Bernalda Alba.

> Analyzing the influences of the Harlem Renaissance literary period and the American economic depression on García Lorca's poetry.

> Identifying themes in Gabriel García Márquez's work which reflected the political and economic unrest in South America, U.S. imperialism, the African American Caribbean influence and his socialistic political orientations

> Examining concepts such as existentialism, metaphysics, immortality, fatality, solitude, circular and linear time, fanaticism, the supernatural, sexual frustration, power, magical realism, violence and spiritual beauty in relationship to literary themes, protagonists and individual tone and style of an author.

Basic Skills, such as decoding, spelling, vocabulary building, grammar, punctuation and paragraph writing, were never taught in isolation, as separate disciplines nor were they determined by teacher decision of perceived student need. The teacher modeled reading and decoding by writing students' inquiries on the overhead projector or on scraps of paper. The connection from the verbal to the written form was made whenever possible. When asked to be a guest speaker at a nearby school district, the teacher stated how the issue of literacy was addressed:

> I honored the fragile game we played. They pretended they knew how to read. I pretended I didn't know they couldn't read.

As students demanded to know how difficult words were pronounced, why accents appeared, the structure of a paragraph or why various phonetic spelling occurred, it was explained. Difficult words were broken down into syllables and phonics was slipped in as students struggled to read as much as possible. Students continued teaching and learning from each other. When they asked to be taught to read, they mastered reading in two sessions. The following scenario is representative of the general style and mood of the learning climate that prevailed.

> **Student:** Rosa, why am I being marked down on organization of ideas? What do you want? It's almost four pages long!
>
> **Teacher:** You're not using paragraphs to show a change of ideas. The paragraphs you use do not have a main idea with supporting sentences. Read my comments! You guys better get it together. I'm running out of ink!
>
> **Student:** I indented. See I indented here, and then I indented here. See.
>
> **Teacher:** But, mi amor, that's not a paragraph.

Student: What's a paragraph?

Teacher: Do you want to know? He nods. Now?

Student: ¡Sí!

Teacher: Anyone who wants to know paragraphs, please come up.

It was evident they thought a paragraph meant: indent, write a little, indent, write a little. These high school students schooled in remedial ESL classes with English language acquisition as the major dimension did not know the basic elements of a paragraph, a concept usually taught on the elementary level. Nor did they know what a main idea was or what supporting sentences were. They thought a paragraph was physical or spatial. It took less than fifteen minutes to master the concepts involved in paragraphs writing when students identified need and determined the time and place for teaching and learning. It was incredible to watch their enthusiasm, their insatiable desire to learn and the excitement created when new skills were mastered, especially knowing that they had a choice whether or not to attend these informal sessions. It was an established pattern crucial to the learning climate. Students appeared hungry for writing mechanics and reading skills. One student commented,

> I can't believe it! This is fun. It feels like when I first learned how to drive. I could hardly wait.

Curricular emphasis was placed on developing a positive ethnic identify. Ethnic identity in this case is defined as a sense of self determined by racial and cultural variables and imbedded in a social and historical context. For example, a positive ethnic identity was enhanced with an awareness of their cultural background, the knowledge of "who I am" rested in part in knowing "from where I came," but equally important in identity formation and development were addressing social and political issues such as the effects and causes of racism and the commitment for social action through community responsibilities.

In this program although students' ethnic and linguistic differences were affirmed, students still perceived these differences as negative. Illustrative is an incident that occurred. A student stated she was ashamed of her accent when she spoke English and that she did not even speak "real Spanish." A world map was shown to demonstrate all the places in the world where Spanish was the dominant language. The elements of a living spoken language with variations depending on the geographical location were discussed. Students were encouraged to be proud that they were bilingual. It was noted that all students in the class spoke at least two languages, Common English and either Spanish, Tagalo, African American English or Chinese. The teacher stated:

> An accent only proves that you can speak at least two languages. Do you know that the United States is the only country in the world where one is considered educated and only speak one language?

The development of self-esteem was an important element of the program. Self-esteem (differentiated from self-concept which is the student's judgment of self relative to others) is defined as a personal judgment of one's worthiness, capability, success or significance and the accompanying feelings of approval and disapproval (Pascarella & Terezini, 1991). Thus, it is directly related to identity development and therefore a critical element in this program. Examples of learning-teaching strategies and activities directed toward this goal follow.

Whereas students were intellectually challenged, they were not subjected to situations where failure was possible. Tasks were designed to be verbal, and students were assessed orally until they mastered reading and writing. In addition a small PIPE [1] grant had provided money for field trips. When field trips were taken, students representing all ethnic groups were invited to participate. This was a way to model acceptance of cultural and ethnic diversity that would perhaps transfer to acceptance of self. Students had breakfast and were publicly praised by the famous Puerto Rican lawyer, talk-show host, Geraldo Rivera, when he was in town. They attended motivational lectures by Jaime Escalante and Henry Cisneros. When Cesar Chavez came to El Centro de la Raza [2], the students attended. They went to dance and music performances at the University of Washington. They visited selected university classes to help them realize that a college education was possible. Spanish literature professors allowed them to participate in third year college literature classes and told them their own college students might not be able to pass the AP literature test.

The local papers ran articles and pictures of their success. Focus (1992), a Seattle Public School monthly newspaper, referred to them as "Stand and Deliver Seattle-Style," stressing that their differences were assets. Ramirez, a Seattle Times newspaper reporter followed them for a year and recording their experiences and their ultimate success. They were featured on the cover and dominated the September 1992 back-to-school issue of the Times Pacific, the Seattle Times Sunday magazine. Ramirez (1992), emphasized how hard they studied, the strengths of using their first language and culture as resources rather than hindrances, their vulnerability, fear and nervousness on test day and finally captured their feelings of family, buoyancy, excitement, expectation and joy while they ripped apart the envelopes containing their AP passing scores

Bridging of Home to School

Home visits were made. Parents and extended families attended functions such as the student Ballet Folklórico performances, academic achievement assemblies and University of Washington MeCHA[3] award presentations. Parents often provided snacks for the late after school sessions. The teacher was invited in for coffee when driving the students home in the evening after study sessions. Repeatedly, students related how amazed they were of the pride their parents expressed because they were studying literature in their own language. Students were surprised that their parents wanted to be involved in and attend the various school functions. They also validated each other's fear of failure since parents were bragging to everyone about the test. Often they would discuss the various literary works and historical events with members of their family. Students stated:

> My Mom and Dad always want to know what happened next in the story. I caught my Dad trying to read El General en su laberinto.
>
> I liked it when my whole family even my aunt came to see us dance the jarabe. My dad bought me a red carnation. My

[1] PIPE stands for Partners In Public Education, an organization affiliated with the Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce which awards financial assistance to worthwhile innovative educational projects in Seattle Public Schools on a competitive basis.

[2] El Centro de La Raza is a community center serving the Latino and Latino population in Seattle.

[3] MeCHA is a Mexican Chicano student organization at the University of Washington.

> mom tells everyone that I can read and write in Spanish.

Student Perception

Student interviews generated perceptions about ethnic identity, self esteem, personal academic expectations, and home-cultural expectations. Some of the student comments are included here to illustrate their type and range:

Students felt that this class allowed them to be themselves, a place where no one laughed at their English competency and where everyone supported each other. For example:

> I could practice my English if I wanted to . No one laughed at me even when I said things all wrong. This is the only class where people talk to me and I have friends.

They felt that this class promoted a healthy ethnic identity allowing them to have pride in their cultural heritage and linguistic abilities. Students commented:

> I think that my pride for being Latino was the most important thing that happened to me, that made me study as hard as I could to be the leader in that program."

> I was proud when I learned to read and write all those hard words in Spanish. I didn't even know there were so many hard words in Spanish."

Being in this class improved their self-esteem allowing them to participate fully in the school's regular and extracurricular activities. For example:

> Now everyone knows me and says Hi. I'm on the volleyball team and on the yearbook staff. I remember when I used to walk outside in the rain or touch the walls on the way to gym. I felt as if I didn't belong, as if no one liked me.

> Other teachers treat me as if I'm smart now that they know I passed the test.

They felt the teacher treated them as individuals with unlimited abilities and resources to be used expecting them to perform at an optimal level but at the same time making them feel secure. This climate of acceptance gave them the confidence to excel. They reported:

> The teacher was willing to work with us after school. I knew I had to do my best work in this class. But she (teacher) knew I could do it. I always felt happy. This class kept me away from street problems. I would stay after school and study instead.

> I liked it when Rosa said I was brilliant. It made me want to work harder. I wanted to be the best in the class. This was hard because everyone wanted to be the best. So we just worked together and studied harder each day.

Of interest were the student responses to the questions that asked: "What does 'gifted' mean to you?" And, "Do you think you are 'gifted'?" This was the first time the word 'gifted' was used explicitly with these students. Some of their responses are summarized below:

> A person who knows a lot thinks a lot and knows almost everything. Who knows? I might just be so. I am intelligent. I only need to develop my capacity.

> A child that has superior qualities, more than others of his age and sometimes more than adults. I think so, not in an intellectual aspect but in my self value and in the power of my self

> determination. In terms of my intellect I function at an adequate level.
>
> A gifted student for me is a student who always reaches his potential. This person knows how to learn. Yes, I think so. Well maybe not but I do know I can pass the test because I studied hard and I tried to do the best I can.

DISCUSSION

When culturally compatible programs exist which use students' resources as strengths, students can achieve at an extraordinary level. The curriculum reform that occurred in this program allowed Latina(o) students to use their cultural and linguistic skills in the classroom. It provided them with an educational program that maintained their native language and increased native language fluency by developing thinking, oral and written skills in Spanish. The instructional content, process and classroom context reflected by student and teacher values, perceptions and behaviors did not treat their cultural language as a deficit talent to be displaced, minimized or destroyed. Thus, cultural denial or forced assimilation (King, 1994) was not a prerequisite for academic success. This program centered the child through "culturally relevant teaching" (Ladson-Billings, 1992) which preserved, affirmed, validated and used student cultural knowledge.

It appears that certain opportunities, such as AP honors classes, are more systematically denied to some students than to others. One of the misconceptions in education is the assumption that a free public education translates to equal opportunity for students from groups of color. It is the quality of opportunities, not merely the presence or absence of opportunity, that determines educational equality (Gay, 1993). In this case, the opportunity to learn appeared to be compromised by the inaccessibility of culturally relevant instruction in Spanish and by student lack of opportunity to enroll in classes even when these classes are offered in a school. Thus, perhaps explaining why equal opportunity as currently defined and practiced in our nation's schools has not resulted in equity of outcome and has failed to eliminate the achievement gap between White and ethnic minority students.

This program illustrated a multicultural claim that programs that are planned and implemented to meet the cultural needs of students succeed, however it

> necessitates changing the fundamental value assumptions, substantive content, operational strategies and evaluation procedures... (Gay, 1990, p. 62).

This study generated several significant messages. Among them are:

> (1) Changes in status and role of student-teacher relationships and acceptable classroom environmental norms created a "family" with all participants actively constructing and contributing to the learning-teaching process. A multicultural climate was created. There was a sharing of power, not merely a sharing of information.
>
> (2) Students traditionally denied access to honors' classes demonstrated the capability to learn and the propensity to excel beyond what would be normally expected.
>
> (3) Peer support was a powerful facilitator in maximizing student achievement.
>
> (4) Interpersonal competence was developed and enhanced. Students learned to make choices, to communicate

effectively for the attainment of goals, to function in a group in both leadership and supporting roles, to use argumentative techniques to persuade others. and to make commitments, take risks and assume responsibility.

(5) There appeared to be a match in student-teacher ideological values and perceptions. The teacher's cognitive framework, that is, the belief that the student's potential to learn is unlimited, the acceptance of cultural and linguistic differences and high expectations were mirrored in students' behavior and comments.

(6) Students verbalized and demonstrated a connection between "working hard" and expected learning outcomes.

CONCLUSION

Since students who participated in this program were able to perform and demonstrate behaviors and characteristics at a level usually associated with giftedness, it seems that culturally centered pedagogy can lead to academic excellence. A remedial, compensatory model for students labeled "at-risk" may not be the best teaching strategy to use with ethnic students. A challenging, demanding model with high expectations which elicits higher order thinking skills produces superior academic achievement. Using a fragmented, discontextualized approach to teaching basic skills may not be pedagogically sound. In this study, teaching and learning of skills were based on students' perceived need as learning gaps emerged. Students determined the time, content and pace of instruction thus decreasing the amount of time needed to master skills.

The change that occurred in this study resulted in equity of educational opportunities for Latina(o) students and in equitable academic outcomes. But most importantly, it attended to the affirmation and validation of ethnic identity, development of self-esteem and intended growth in self empowerment.

¡Si queremos podemos!

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